



MINUTES

BOARD OF EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSIONERS

December 21, 2016 at 2:30 P.M. in City Hall, Rm. 301-A

Present:

Commissioner Jeffery Roman, Chair
Commissioner Chez Ordonez, Co-Chair
Commissioner Tony Snell
Commissioner Sheila Ashley
Sharon Robinson, Dept. of Administration
Jessica Langill, Dept. of Administration
Ben Roovers, City Attorney's Office

Absent: Commissioner Marquette Baylor

Commissioner Mayhoua Moua
Commissioner Aldira Aldape

Guests/Members of the public present:

Patricia Ruiz-Cantu, Dept. of Administration
Eric Pearson, Budget & Management Division
Karen Gotzler, Milwaukee LGBT Community Center

The meeting was called to order at 2:42 p.m. by Commissioner Roman.

1. Approval of minutes from November 16, 2016 meeting

Commissioner Roman asked if there were any additions or modifications to the minutes; no feedback from the Commission. With no objections from the Commission, the minutes were approved unanimously.

2. New Appointments/Re-Appointments

Commissioner Roman stated that he was excited to have a full Commission after having only five Commissioners for the majority of 2016. He introduced newly appointed Commissioners Tony Snell and Sheila Ashley. Commissioner Ashley shared she is a recent retiree from HUD, served in the army, and worked at the City of Milwaukee. She stated she identifies as a disabled veteran and a custodian of the Public Trust. Commissioner Snell shared that he had engaged with the ERC for over a year as a member of the public and encouraged other community members to become involved with the ERC through meeting attendance. He stated he has 20+ years of advocacy (primarily with the LGBTQ+ community) experience, and self-identifies as a son and husband of immigrants. Commissioner Snell stated multiculturalism and the transgender community are extremely important to him.

3. Milwaukee Promise Report: Eric Pearson (Budget & Management Division)

Commissioner Roman stated that one of the bigger initiatives the ERC monitors is the Milwaukee Promise initiative/report, which has been in existence for 5 years. Ms. Sharon Robinson stated that some of what is done with the Milwaukee Promise Report aligns with the mission of the ERC, and it would be a good idea to find synergies and areas to work together in the future. Mr. Eric Pearson stated that an amendment to the 2011 Budget brought about the adoption of the Milwaukee Promise, which would serve as “a commitment to be responsible and accountable in expenditures of the city relating to poverty, disparity, and inequality.” The Milwaukee Promise is set up as a reporting system to provide the Mayor and Council with information that will help them develop a more inclusive budget. Reports on each department were originally presented to the Finance Committee of the Common Council, but it was then decided that reporting should be organized on an outcome basis focused on 4 community outcomes; housing & neighborhoods, public safety, jobs & income, and public health. The reports present historical trend data, city services and initiatives, and community impact. Mr. Pearson stated at this point the reports have been more informational and a conduit to start discussions among the Council about the challenges the city faces and strategic approaches the city could take. Mr. Pearson stated he would send the 2016 reports to Ms. Langill, which would then be forwarded to the Commissioners. Commissioner Roman asked if the reports are done at a certain time each year and Mr. Pearson stated that they try to get the reports done by April (before the budget process begins). Commissioner Snell requested that the ERC be given a copy of the Milwaukee Promise Report right when it comes out so the Commission can review it before the budget process begins. Commissioner Roman asked if the community was involved in informing the reports in any way and Mr. Pearson stated there was no direct involvement from the community, but that they were looking into new ways to present the information to the public through the city website. Mr. Pearson stated he would be happy to work with the ERC and provide any additional information.

4. Marketing Materials

Ms. Langill presented the Commissioners with marketing materials for the ERC that would be used at events and distributed throughout the city. After reviewing the materials Commissioner Snell expressed concern about “gender identity and expression” not being listed as a protected class on the card under the wording “It is illegal for a landlord or employer to discriminate against you based on:.” The ERC’s Attorney, Ben Roovers explained that since gender identity and expression is not covered under state or national law that he advised that it be removed from the card based on the language about legality. Discussion ensued about the importance of including gender identity and expression on any marketing materials put out by the ERC and sending a message to the community that the ERC works to protect all people. The Commissioners discussed that the marketing materials needed to be worded in a way that was less about legalities and more about inclusion and fostering better community relations. It was decided that new marketing materials would not be printed and disseminated until after the Ordinance was rewritten to provide the ERC with more reinforcement mechanisms to provide

protection to all classes listed in Chapter 109. Ms. Robinson talked about the importance of rewriting the Ordinance, but also keeping in mind budget and staffing restrictions. Commissioner Ordonez suggested that the Ordinance rewrite needed to be done before any strategic planning should take place. He also stated that the Commission needed to think about what they can be doing now to support the protected classes while the Ordinance rewrite is taking place. Commissioner Snell suggested that the Transgender Law Center be added to the resource list on the ERC website. He also stated that the ERC could support transgender people in being connected to lawyers that would be able to help them through any discrimination. Commissioner Ashley stated it would be helpful to build the Chapter 109 rewrite off the work already being done in Madison and other similar cities. Commissioner Snell moved to create a sub-committee of 3 Commissioners to focus on rewriting the Ordinance with the City Attorney and the Department of Administration. The Commissioners unanimously voted to create the sub-committee.

5. Goals and Priorities for 2017

Commissioner Roman stated that the first goal and priority for 2017 needed to be the Chapter 109 Ordinance rewrite. Ms. Robinson stated it was important to get buy-in from City decision and policy makers before presenting the rewrite to the Finance Committee and the Council. She stated it was up to the ERC to be transparent about the direction the Commission wants to go and to educate policy makers on the issues. Commissioner Roman suggested that Commissioners Ordonez, Snell, and Ashley be assigned to the Ordinance Rewrite sub-committee so that the process can get started right away. He appointed Commissioner Ordonez as the chair of the committee and tasked him with setting up the first meeting in January.

6. Office of African American Affairs

Commissioner Roman stated that community members have been asking him and other Commissioners about the status of the newly created Office of African American Affairs. Commissioner Roman shared that he had reached out to Alderman Rainey's office and had been given a copy of the Amendment and some information on what they were currently working on for the OAAA. Commissioner Roman said that the Commissioners could use the Amendment and information as talking points to be used for community members. Commissioner Snell stated it would be important for a representative from the OAAA to let the ERC know about what they are working on and to be available to answer questions. Ms. Robison stated that after discussion it was determined that it was premature to have a separate Milwaukee chapter of the OAAA and that the county is willing to collaborate with the City. The City will be providing the location for the office and will be working with the County on planning and staff-sharing. Ms. Robinson stated that this is a work in progress and nothing has been set in stone yet. Commissioner Roman stated Alderman Rainey's Office is open for questions and is willing to talk with the ERC about any concerns in the future. Ms. Robinson suggested that one of the Commissioners formally invite Nate Holton from the County and Alderman Rainey for the next ERC meeting.

7. Community Dialogue

Commissioner Snell read a statement he had prepared for the ERC Commission and others in attendance. His statement expressed his commitment to the City of Milwaukee and the ERC Commission. He articulated the importance of supporting and protecting transgender people and provided a report from a recent study on issues transgender people face. Commissioner Snell stated it was up to the ERC to “reach out, build trust, and let [the transgender community] know we provide safe, affirming, respectful means to right the wrongs.” Commissioner Snell introduced Karen Gotzler, the Executive Director at the Milwaukee LGBT Center. He stated that the LGBT Center was open to holding ERC meetings at their location to allow community dialogue about issues LGBTQ+ people face in the City of Milwaukee. Commissioner Roman stated there were synergies between the work being done with Black Male Achievement and the young gay, bisexual, and transgender people involved in the initiative. Ms. Ruiz-Cantu stated she had attended the second part of the “Bridging the Gap” discussion between the community and police officers. She stated that meeting was powerful and positive. Commissioner Snell stated that there was an event at the Islamic Resource Center that night to get to know the Islamic community. Ms. Robinson stated that the ERC should think about going out into the community and holding more meetings for the people to encourage community involvement. Commissioner Roman stated that the ERC would start holding meetings within the community starting in spring and that the Commissioners should reach out to their respective communities to find locations for the meetings. Ms. Robinson also stated that she thought it was important for the Budget Director to come do a presentation on budgeting. Commissioner Roman requested that the Budget Director be invited to the January ERC meeting to talk about the budget cycle.

8. Next Meeting is Wednesday, January 18th at 2:30pm

9. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

* * *

jml